

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000103

SIPDIS

USDA/FAS/FAA/CALEXANDER/MCONLON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/04/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [CASC](#) [AEMR](#) [EATD](#) [MASS](#) [SOCI](#) [EAGR](#) [ID](#) [CE](#) [MV](#)

SUBJECT: INDIA TSUNAMI SITREP: JANUARY 5

REF: NEW DELHI 8233

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

1. (SBU) Summary: Consular officers in India, through nightly call-backs in response to tsunami-related missing persons inquiries, have closed more than 350 cases in the last 48 hours and expect to bring the number below 200 by January 6. Following the Ambassador's January 4 press conference, reports misquoted SciCouns as having said that formal proposals for US-India collaboration are on the table. Although observers in New Delhi have been enthusiastic about Indian assistance for Sri Lanka, at least one prominent politician has expressed concern over aid making its way to the LTTE. The military announced that relief operations are "98 percent complete" in Andaman and Nicobar, but the number of Indian deaths continues to increase. End Summary.

Consular: India-Wide Effort to Locate Americans

2. (U) All consular officers across India have been engaged in a nightly, after-hours effort to re-contact persons in the US who have inquired about loved ones, making every effort to locate the missing. As a result of this country-wide approach, consular India has closed more than 350 cases in the last 48 hours, and hopes to have the list of open cases down to less than 200 by Thursday morning, at which point New Delhi will transfer responsibility for all open cases back to ConGen Chennai. Reconsolidating responsibility should help focus consular's efforts and avoid potentially dropped-balls as officers work to account for the remaining missing. All New Delhi consular officers lent to other posts in the region (including one who was vacationing in Phuket and stepped in to provide ACS support) are expected back on the visa line by Monday, January 10.

Tsunami Science

SIPDIS

3. (U) At the Ambassador's January 4 briefing, the press demonstrated considerable interest in tsunami alert/warning systems and US collaboration with India to develop sea level monitoring systems (reftel). The "Times of India" misquoted SciCouns stating that "we had a proposal from India to set up a network of tidal ocean level gauges in the Bay of Bengal," but in fact we have not yet received any formal Indian proposals for cooperation in this area. On January 6, the Mission expects to learn more about the team of experts that Department of Science and Technology Secretary VS Ramamurthy plans to call together to advise the GOI on monitoring systems.

Watching Where the Aid Goes in Sri Lanka

4. (U) While GOI disaster relief for Sri Lanka has been a source of pride for Indians, Janata Party president Subramanian Swamy has expressed concern over which parts of the country New Delhi's assistance reaches. On December 30, Swamy reportedly requested the GOI to ensure that its aid does not make its way to the LTTE or the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), which he considers an LTTE front. He also urged the US to look into the role of the TRO in the United States as a conduit for aid to the LTTE.

Death Toll in India Climbing

5. (U) The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reported that through January 4, 9,575 Indians had died as a result of the tsunami, an increase of nearly 100 from the previous day.

SIPDIS

The MHA also revised the number of missing to 5,918 (from 5,681 on January 3), of which 5,801 are from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Andaman and Nicobar: "98% Done"

6. (U) Despite the number of individuals still missing, Vice

Admiral Raman Puri, Chief of the Integrated Defense Staff (IDS), was quoted in local press reports as having announced that 98 percent of immediate relief work in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands had been completed. The GOI noted that search and rescue and relief operations are coming to an end and the next phase of recovery and reconstruction operations are underway. International NGOs are still prohibited from operating in the Nicobar Islands, which are militarily sensitive.

The Neighbors Pitch in For India

17. (C) On January 4 media reports indicated that Indian helicopters, which cannot fly from the eastern part of the country to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands alone, have flown via Burma. The GOI confirmed this to DAO, noting that eight MI-17 helicopters stopped for refueling in Rangoon before proceeding to the Islands. India has also reportedly received similar support from Bangladesh for helicopter operations from Bangladesh.

Only the Beginning in Indonesia

18. (C) India's relief for Indonesia, Operation Gambhir, is just getting underway, according to the Ministry of Defense. Two Indian Navy vessels, a survey ship, the INS Nirupak, which the GOI converted to a hospital, and the INS Khukri, which left from Chennai on December 31 carrying tents, blankets, emergency rations, and emergency medical supplies, have reached or will soon arrive in Aceh, the MEA reported. Defense officials told DAO that Indian assistance for Indonesia will be expanded.

MULFORD